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INCOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

SECRET

41 Action SS Info

EXCISE

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S E C R E T SAIGON 22498 SECTION 1 OF 2

EXDIS

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1. DURING A TALK WITH GENERAL THIEU APRIL 8, I DISCUSSED THE FOLLOWING MATTERS RELATED TO ELECTIONS AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES.

A. SECURITY OF PRESIDENTIAL AND OTHER CANDIDATES

2. I STRESSED TO THIEU SUBSTANTIALLY WHAT I HAD STRESSED TO KY CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF Getting REALLY ADEQUATE SECURITY PROTECTION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES. IF ANYTHING WERE TO HAPPEN TO ONE OF THEM, I SAID, IT COULD UNDO MUCH OF THE WORK THAT HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN THE LAST YEAR. HE SEEMED TO THINK ABOUT IT AND FINALLY AGREED WITH ME. I ALSO STRESSED THE DEPUTIES AND THOSE WHO ARE RUNNING IN LOCAL ELECTIONS. I REFERRED TO THE DEPUTIES WHO ARE RECEIVING CANDY BOXES CONTAINING GRENADES PAINTED RED AND ASKED WHO HE THOUGHT WAS DOING IT. HE SAID THAT LITERALLY ANYONE COULD DO IT, THAT THESE WERE NORMAL VIETNAMESE TACTICS AND IT COULD COME FROM A DISAFFECTED NATIONALIST. ONE THING WAS SURE: WHEN THIS KIND OF THING WENT ON, IT THREATENED THE PRESTIGE OF THE POLICE.

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B. PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

3. I THEN SOUGHT TO CARRY OUTTHE INSTRUCTION IN STATE 167136. I BEGAN BY REMARKING THAT I HAD BEEN OUT ON THE "ENTERPRISE" THE DAY AFTER GENERAL THIEU AND GENERAL KY HAD BEEN THERE, AND THAT I HAD BEEN ADVISED OF GENERAL THIEU'S STATEMENT, WHEN ASKED, WHETHER HE WOULD BE A CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT, AS FOLLOWS: "MAYBE YES, MAYBE NO. I ENDORSE GENERAL KY." THEN, I SAID, APPARENTLY GENERAL KY HAD SAID SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME THING.

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4. I TOLD GENERAL THIEU THAT I HAD TOLD GENERAL KY - AND NOW WISHED TO TELL HIM - THAT WE THOUGHT THIS WAS A BROADMINDED ATTITUDE AND THAT A FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION AND DECISION ON THIS MATTER WAS VERY IMPORTANT.

5. I THEN SAID THAT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT IT WOULD NOT BE GOOD FOR ANY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN VIET-NAM TO BE KNOWN AS THE "AMERICAN CANDIDATE". NEITHER, I SAID, WOULD IT BE GOOD FOR US. OBVIOUSLY, THE VOTERS HAD TO BELIEVE THAT A CANDIDATE COULD WORK WITH THE AMERICANS, BUT THIS IS A VERY DIFFERENT THING FROM BEING AN AMERICAN PUPPET.

5. HE AGREED AND SAID THAT ANY PRESIDENT WHO WAS ELECTED AS THE "AMERICAN CANDIDATE" WOULD FIND HIS WORK EXTREMELY DIFFICULT THEREAFTER. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, HE SAID, A STRONG BELIEF TO THIS EFFECT - A "PREJUDICE," IF YOU WILL, THAT AMERICAN MONEY AND AMERICAN ORGANIZATION ALWAYS DECIDES SUCH QUESTIONS.

6. I RECALLED THAT WHEN I CAME HERE IN 1963, WE HAD HELPED PRESIDENT DIEM IN MANY WAYS, WITH THE RESULT THAT MANY VIETNAMESE WERE HOLDING US RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POLICE STATE

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METHODS WHICH WERE THEN BEING USED. IT WAS VERY HARD TO PROVE THEM WRONG WHEN THEY SAID THAT WE HAD A CONSIDERABLE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS. FOR US TO SPONSOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES HAD A COLONIAL FLAVOR, WOULD PUT US IN A FALSE LIGHT, AND WOULD TEND TO RETARD THE ENCOURAGMG PROGRESS WHICH WAS BEING MADE IN VIET-NAM TOWARDS DEVELOPING AN ATTITUDE OF SELF-CONFIDENCE AND OF RESPONSIBILITY.

7. HE SAID THAT IT WOULD INDEED BE DESIREABLE TO "WIPE OUT THIS PREJUDICE," BUT HE THOUGHT THAT THE ONLY WAY IT COULD BE DONE WOULD BE BY THE PASSAGE OF TIME, BY FACTS BY THE TRUTH. AS PEOPLE WATCHED THE SITUATION AND SAW DAY AFTER DAY THAT NONE OF THESE THINGS HAPPENED WHICH THEY SAID WERE GOING TO HAPPEN THEY WOULD BE CONVINCED.

8. COMMENT: WE ARE THUS ON RECORD WITH BOTH KY AND THIEU OF BEING "EQUIDISTANT" AND OF NOT "GETTING BETWEEN THEM OR MAKING A CHOICE IN ONE DIRECTIONOR ANOTHER, OR, FOR THAT MATTER, BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN CANDIDATES," TO QUOTE

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FROM 167136. THE CONVERSATION DID NOT DEVELOP IN A WAY TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO DISCUSS WHAT HE WOULD "DO BESIDES BEING PRESIDENT."

C. WHAT THIEU SAID YESTERDAY

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9. [redacted] TOLD ME THE FOLLOWING:

10. YESTERDAY, FRIDAY, HE RECEIVED WORD FROM THIEU'S PRESS AIDE, MAJOR LAM, THAT THIEU WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIM. WHEN HE WENT TO THE PALACE FRIDAY AFTERNOON, LAM SAID TO BE SURE TO ASK THIEU ABOUT BIG MINH. WHEN [redacted] WENT INTO THIEU'S OFFICE, LAM CAME ALONG TOO.

11. THE CONVERSATION BEGAN WITH THIEU SAYING THAT KY WAS REATLY UNBEATABLE. HE WAS VERY WELL KNOWN, HE HAD THE POLICE ON HIS SIDE; HE HAD GENERAL THANG IN EFFECT AS "CAPAIGN MANAGER WITH HIS WHOLE REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION BEHIND HIM'; AND HE HAD ACCESS TO MONEY AND RESOURCES WHICH NOBODY ELSE HAD. COMMENT: I BELIEVE THIS IS UNFAIR TO THANG. END COMMENT.

LODGE
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